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ABSTRACT

Editors of 16 daily newspapers in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey were interviewed regarding their awareness of local and international urban problems and the reporting of urban problems in their newspapers. Content analysis was then used to determine the urban problems covered by the newspapers. In narrative and tabular form, this document reports and compares the interviewees' rankings of 20 urban problems and the rankings of those problems according to their coverage by the 16 newspapers. The rankings of the journalists, as well as the rankings derived from content analysis, are also compared on a city-by-city basis. Analysis of the findings indicates that there are a number of discrepancies between what the editors perceived to be the most important urban problems and what problems were actually reported in their newspapers. The data show strong correlations of rankings--both by journalists and by newspaper coverage--when subjected to intra-city comparisons. (GW)

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NEWS COVERAGE OF URBAN PROBLEMS IN THE MEXICAN METROPOLITAN PRESS

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NEWS COVERAGE OF URBAN PROBLEMS IN THE MEXICAN METROPOLITAN PRESS

by Michael Sewell*

In recent years there has been an intensification and proliferation of concerns over problems created by industrial and technological society. Political, economic and social leaders express a sense of urgency in dealing with problems that relate to ecology, urban life and lifestyles. Often the problems turn into crises, such as the "energy crisis" in the United States in the 1970's. The magnitude of such problems has extended concern from political leaders to various social leaders and to concerned citizens. The scope and nature of such problems has aroused concern on an international scale as well.

In the Third World countries urban problems are assuming both greater importance and greater recognition because of a trend of rapid, large-scale urbanization. Urbanization is defined here as the process of accelerated cityward migration and its concomitant aspects, such as assimilation and socialization of migrants in urban areas, and effects on migration

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*The author conducted research for his Ph.D. dissertation, on which this paper is based, while a student at The University of Texas at Austin. Special thanks are due to Joseph A. Taylor, supervising professor, and committee members Wayne A. Danielson, DeWitt C. Reddick, Karl M. Schmitt, and Gene Burd. Financial assistance was provided by the Department of Journalism and the School of Communication.

rates, such as actual or perceived conditions (including urban problems) in urban areas. Predictions that the population of Mexico will be 70 percent urban based by 1980[1] emphasize the necessity for coping with today's urban problems and readjusting social and political processes and institutions for future urban life.

Urban problems are defined here as those major aspects of urban life which present the political system with contradictory solutions and lead to differing perceptions among leaders and citizens over quality of change in urban life. That mass media are important in relation to urban problems is epitomized by Lippmann's observation, "The only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event."[2] The mass media are important here because images formed from media usage may well determine what things are "problems" and what things are not, and what is to be done or not done.

The role of the mass media in forming and disseminating such perceptions is significant because of several important repercussions. First, there is the role of the media in reinforcing or challenging the stereotypes of leaders and elites. Their stereotypes are important because much of the power and responsibility of dealing with problems and of directing national development lies with them.

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[1]See, for example, sources cited in Wayne A. Cornelius, Jr., "Urbanization as an Agent in Latin American Political Instability: The Case of Mexico," American Political Science Review, Vol. 63 (1969), pp. 837-38.

[2]Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (New York: The Free Press, 1922), p. 9.

Independence and professionalism on the part of the media can be important in helping determine whether the pseudo-environment of the leaders and opinion makers conforms to reality. One frequent criticism of the Mexican press is that it is elitist--that is, it reinforces the views and wishes of a power bloc of political and economic leaders at the expense of mass public opinion.[3]

Second, there is the role of the media in helping or hindering the adjustment of the images or perceptions of large masses of people who move from rural to urban communities as to the realities of urban society. Of course, perceptions of migrants to the cities can be affected by many factors, including a lack of media usage, but they also can be affected by poor or negative media performance. For example, the newcomer may compare the image portrayed in the media with his own image and find the former unrealistic or not relevant. Von Lazar has observed the potentiality of the role of the mass media as part of networks or patterns of urban socialization:

> By and large, individuals migrating to the cities tend to retain the institutions and relations of their former environments and are not really socialized into the urban society. Very often the pattern we may find is a mere "ruralization" of the urban environment, instead of the anticipated "urbanization" of the rural migrant....Eventually, the migrants are partially socialized for the simple reason that all isolation is merely partial and...in addition, the recent migrant is subjected to the effects of education and literally bombarded by mass media in all its forms.[4]

Third, there is the role of the media in shaping the attitudes and understandings of potential urbanites. Images of the city for

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[3]See, for example, John C. Merrill, Carter R. Bryan and Marvin Alisky, The Foreign Press: A Survey of the World's Journalism (Baton Rouge, La. Louisiana State University Press, 1970), p. 180.

[4]Arpad von Lazar, Latin American Politics: A Primer (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971), p. 79.

persons in the countryside who are considering migration can be of great significance. Mental pictures of the metropolis affect the decision of the rural dweller on how good or bad conditions are relative to his present home and job. The types of urban problems reported by the press and broadcast media possibly affect the larger problem of rural-urban migration and socio-economic disequilibrium between cities and the countryside. Whatever affects this broader issue of urbanization can, of course, alter the rate of modernization and national development in Mexico.

If one concedes an important role for the mass media in the broader processes of urbanization, cognitive modernization and national development in Mexico, the reporting of urban problems merits close study. One might focus, as this study has, on evaluation of local news coverage of urban problems by daily newspapers in Mexico's three largest metropolises. That evaluation centers on the nature of urban problems perceived by Mexican editors, and correlations between what they designate as important urban problems and what urban problems are reported in their newspapers, and in what amounts.

Methodology

Sixteen daily newspapers in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey were the media studied.[5] The editor with primary responsibility for the assignment of urban problems news in his

[5]The sixteen newspapers were: El Norte, El Sol, El Porvenir and Tribuna de Monterrey, all of Monterrey; El Informador, El Occidental and El Sol de Guadalajara, all of Guadalajara; and Excelsior, El Heraldo, El Nacional, Novedades, Diario de la Tarde, La Prensa, El Sol de Mexico, El Sol de Mexico (edicción de mediodia) and El Universal, all of Mexico City.

city was interviewed at each of the newspapers. That person was deemed the most appropriate journalist for study because he serves the "gatekeeper" role[6] of determining what is reported (through his assignments for coverage) or what is printed (through his selection and editing of news copy submitted to him). The journalist who most often fits this description in the Mexican daily press is the jefe de informacion.[7] The position is roughly analogous to the city editor at U. S. daily newspapers. Each journalist was interviewed by the author with the aid of an interview schedule which, among other data, sought information about the journalist's awareness of both local and international urban problems, and a description of recent urban problems reporting at his newspaper.

Prior to the field research, which was conducted in March, 1975, a mail questionnaire had been sent to appropriate journalists at the newspaper to be studied and to the mayor of the three cities and governor of the three states in which the newspapers are located (Nuevo Leon, Jalisco and Mexico). The public officials were chosen to obtain perception of urban problems from knowledgeable persons other than journalists since the mail questionnaires were to be used to compile a composite list of urban problems for ranking by the journalists later. The response rate was nine returns from twenty-two mail questionnaires, including two returns from the six public officials.

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[6]See the studies of Walter Gieber, "Across the Desk: A Case Study of 16 Telegraph Editors," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 33 (Winter, 1956), pp. 423-32 and David M. White, "The 'Gatekeeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 27 (Winter, 1950), pp. 383-90.

[7]See Jose Cardo Guarderas, Periodismo (Mexico City: Editorial Diana, 1974), pp. 37-45.

After receipt of the preliminary questionnaire returns, the interview schedule was constructed and pretested with the assistance of a journalism colleague whose native tongue is Spanish. Interviews in Mexico were conducted after determination that the prospective interviewee was indeed the editor with chief responsibility for news coverage of urban problems. In one instance, it was determined that the jefe de redaccion (chief of editing) was the person sought, and in another case the director ejecutivo (executive director) supervised urban news coverage for both dailies in his organization. Interviews generally lasted about one hour.

It is felt that valid information was obtained through the ranking of the composite list of urban problems by the interviewees, and by their open-ended descriptions of urban problems coverage or campaigns at their newspapers. The method of cross-checking used to help strengthen validity was content analysis. A construct week sample, drawn from the month prior to the interviews, was used for each of the newspapers where a journalist was interviewed.[8] Content analysis was conducted by locating and measuring in column inches news stories dealing with urban problems. The categories were established by using the urban problems compiled from the mail questionnaire and later ranked by the interviewees. If an urban problem had been listed by only one respondent in the mail questionnaire, it was included in its original wording; otherwise, similar listings were summarized. Tables 1 and 2 list the categories in English and in Spanish. Coding of categories was by the story unit:

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[8]See Wayne A. Danielson, "Content Analysis in Communication Research," Introduction to Mass Communications Research, edited by Ralph O. Nafziger and David M. White. Second edition (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), p. 185, for a discussion of the composite or construct week method of sampling.

TABLE 1

Categories of Urban Problems in News Stories

1. Overpopulation
2. Environmental contamination
3. Illness resulting from urban life
4. Unemployment and underemployment
5. Lack of housing
6. Mass transit
7. Drug addiction and pharmaceutical dependence
8. Medical assistence for the underprivileged
9. Food supply
10. Rural migration to the city (urbanization)
11. Misappropriation, bribery and corruption among bureaucrats
12. Shortage of schools
13. Public services (public safety, cleanliness, lighting, parks, etc.)
14. Inflation
15. Lack of credit for social service works (aid to society)
16. Drainage
17. Peddlers (wandering vendors)
18. Zones of crowded, small apartments and of shacks (slums)
19. Proliferation of university enrollments
20. Potable water

TABLE 2

Categories of Urban Problems in News Stories

1. Sobrepoblación
2. Contaminación del ambiente
3. Enfermedades por deficiencias de caracter urbanistico
4. Desempleo y subempleo
5. La falta de habitación
6. Transporte masivo
7. Drogadiccion y farmacodependencia
8. Asistencia medico para la sociedad de escasos recursos
9. Abasto y distribución adecuada de alimentos
10. Migracion rural a la ciudad (urbanizacion)
11. Malversación, sobornación y corrupción entre burocratas
12. Falta de escuelas
13. Servicios públicos
14. Encarecimiento de la vida
15. Falta de creditos para obras de servicio social
16. Drenaje
17. Vendedores ambulantes
18. Zonas de tugurios, jacales, etc.
19. Crecimiento de la matricula a las universidades
20. Agua potable

the entire news story was evaluated as to which of the listed categories it principally fit, if any. This form of item analysis involved consideration of the context of the story. For example, coding instructions pointed out that some categories can be found in the words per se, while others involve contextual judgements. Headlines were included in the measurement of news stories by column inches. Only the newshole was checked for news stories and to calculate percentages of total news for urban problems news. Newshole is defined here as all space allotted for news, but specifically excluding advertisements, society sections, and news, sports sections and news, financial sections and news, editorial sections, and amusements, such as comic strips, cartoons, horoscopes and crosswork puzzles. Coder reliability checks were made to strengthen validity of the content analysis. Three persons, all fluent in Spanish, and two of who had worked for a Spanish-language newspaper, each coded a sample of ten news stories from the newspaper sample according to specific coding instructions. The author, who ultimately did the actual content analysis, also separately coded the sample. The sample of ten stories was selected by the author; the coder did not have to locate the story but rather to classify it. Agreement between each coder and the author was computed by a formula devised by Holsti[9] and a variation of that formula for intercoder agreement. There was total agreement between the author and one coder, agreement on nine of ten stories with another, and on eight of ten with the third coder. Intercoder

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[9]Robert C. North, Ole Holsti, M. George Zaninovich and Dina A. Zinnes, Content Analysis: A Handbook With Applications for the Study of International Crisis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1963).

agreement was computed as 92.5 percent (agreement on 37 of 40 category assignments).

Findings

Profile of Journalists

The average age of the fifteen men interviewed[10] was 39 years. Two of the group were licenciados (holders of specialized academic degrees), eight were college graduates, three attended college for at least one year, and two were high school graduates. The average person in this group had 12.7 years of newspaper experience. Only one editor majored in journalism or communication in college, and he received a bachelo. s degree from a U.S. university.[11] Six of the editors had non-journalism jobs previously, including such employment as the following: policeman, city government public relations practitioner, photographer, personnel manager, accountant, salesman, and tour guide. All fifteen editors had traveled extensively in almost all major cities and regions of Mexico. Eight had travelled in other parts of the world, mostly the United States and Western Europe.

News Coverage of Local Urban Problems

While the author has data that show comparisons between the journalists' rankings of urban problems and rankings based on the amounts of news coverage of those problems in the newspapers tabulated by individual newspaper, it is felt that total and intra-city

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[10]One editor held responsibility for urban problems coverage at both newspapers in his organization; thus, fifteen editors were interviewed at the sixteen newspapers.

[11]It should be noted, however, that journalism and mass communication departments and schools at universities in Mexico are relatively new, most having been established in the past fifteen years.

correlations will be of more use to the reader.[12] For example, an all-editor ranking compared with an all-newspaper ranking may tend to neutralize possible personality differences and extreme scores among editors. Table 3 illustrates the comparison of rankings of twenty local urban problems by the group of interviewees with the rankings of those problems compiled from content analysis of news coverage by the sixteen newspapers. The rho correlation coefficient of the two methods of ranking the twenty categories is .445, significant at the .05 level.

Intra-City Comparisons

It is relevant here also to compare the rankings of journalists, as well as the rankings derived from content analysis, on a city-by-city basis. Reflection on specific data will reveal that urban problems differ in magnitude (or perceived magnitude) in the three metropolitan areas of Monterrey, Guadalajara and Mexico City. Such comparison can give better perspective on consensus or lack of consensus about urban problems among the "gatekeepers" in each city.

The method of comparison used here is the Kendall coefficient of concordance (W), which expresses the correlation between several sets of rankings of objects (e.g., urban problems categories). W seems particularly applicable here, since it is said to be useful in situations where there are no known objective standards of measurement, and perception of urban problems is such a situation.

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[12]For more specific data see Michael Sewell, "A Study of Urban Problems Treatment in the Mexican Press: The Impact of International News Diffusion on National Development" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1975).

TABLE 3

COMPARISON OF RANKINGS OF LOCAL URBAN PROBLEMS BY JOURNALISTS AT 16 MEXICAN NEWSPAPERS WITH RANKINGS OF THOSE PROBLEMS COMPUTED FROM AMOUNTS OF ACTUAL NEWS COVERAGE OF THE CATEGORIES

Category	Editor's Ranking*	Coverage Ranking**
1. Population	6	15
2. Environment	1	10.5
3. Illness	11	12
4. Employment	4	14
5. Housing	10	9
6. Transportation	3	3
7. Drugs	14	7
8. Medical	19	13
9. Food	5	1
10. Migration	7	10.5
11. Bribes	12.5	4
12. Schools	15	6
13. Services	8	2
14. Inflation	12.5	16
15. Social	20	19
16. Drainage	17	18
17. Vendors	18	20
18. Slums	9	17
19. Universities	16	8
20. Water	2	5

rho = .455 p = < .05 N = 20

*Ranking is based on 15 interviewees.

**Ranking is based on coverage of 16 newspapers.

Interpretation of W will be discussed later. The formula used here for computing W contains a correction factor for offsetting the effect of tied ranks. Chi-square (X^2) is used as the test of significance for W.[13]

Monterrey

Table 4 illustrates the rankings of twenty urban problems categories by the three journalists interviewed in Monterrey. The degree of association among their rankings, W, equals .580, significant at the .05 level. As can be seen by summing the ranks, category 1, "overpopulation," was ranked by consensus the most important urban problem and category 19, "growth of university enrollments," was ranked the least important.

Table 5 illustrates the rankings of twenty urban problems categories by news coverage of the four newspapers of the journalists interviewed in Monterrey. The degree of association among the content rankings, W, equals .617, significant at the .001 level. As can be seen from the ranks, category 13, "public services," ranked first in composite coverage as the most important urban problem; category 15, "lack of credit for social service works," and category 18, "zones of crowded, small apartments and of shacks," tied in ranking the least important.

Both these data and data for each individual newspaper reveal a lack of high correlation between how some urban problems categories were ranked by journalists and how those categories were

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[13]For a concise discussion of the Kendall coefficient of concordance, see Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), pp. 229-38.

TABLE 4

RANKINGS OF 20 URBAN PROBLEMS IN MONTERREY BY JOURNALISTS OF FOUR NEWSPAPERS IN THAT CITY

Editor	Category						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
El Norte & El Sol	1.5	10	16	1.5	16	9	16
El Porvenir	3	2	1	5	4	8	18
Tribuna de Monterrey	1	5	4	3	9	18	18
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
El Norte & El Sol	16	16	4.5	3	16	6	7
El Porvenir	7	6	12	13	17	15	16
Tribuna de Monterrey	18	10	2	14	15	7	13
	15	16	17	18	19	20	
El Norte & El Sol	16	16	11	4.5	16	8	
El Porvenir	14	9	20	10	19	11	
Tribuna de Monterrey	18	11	6	8	18	12	

W = .580 p = < .05 df = 19

TABLE 5

RANKINGS OF 20 URBAN PROBLEMS IN MONTERREY BY NEWS COVERAGE OF FOUR NEWSPAPERS IN THAT CITY

Newspaper	Category 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
El Norte	17	17	4	13	17	17	11
El Sol	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	6	15.5	3
El Porvenir	7	11	17	5	3	9	17
Tribuna de Monterrey	10	14.5	12.5	18	9	18	12.5

	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
El Norte	5	2	9	7	8	1	3
El Sol	4	5	9	2	10	1	7
El Porvenir	4	2	17	10	8	1	12
Tribuna de Monterrey	2	3	11	6	8	1	4

	15	16	17	18	19	20
El Norte	17	17	10	17	6	12
El Sol	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	8	15.5
El Porvenir	17	6	17	17	17	13
Tribuna de Monterrey	18	7	18	18	14.5	5

W = .617 p = < .001 df = 19

reported by their newspapers; such inconsistencies will be discussed later. It is judicious to observe here, however, that intra-city comparisons are useful in order to consider the perceptions of a group of journalists within the same city. In this regard Siegel's comment on interpretation of W is relevant:

> A high or significant value of W may be interpreted as meaning that the observers or judges are applying essentially the same standard in ranking the N objects under study. Often their pooled ordering may serve as a "standard," especially when there is no relevant external criterion for ordering the objects.
>
> It should be emphasized that a high or significant value of W does not mean that the orderings observed are correct. . . . To state the point another way, a high degree of agreement about an order does not necessarily mean that the order which was agreed upon is the "objective" one.[14] (emphasis original)

Similarly, it is useful to examine intra-city data of news coverage of urban problems because urban problems vary from city to city. A look at patterns of coverage by three or more newspapers within a city can provide a better perspective of which urban problems are being offered to readers, and in what priorities.

Guadalajara.

Table 6 illustrates the rankings of twenty urban problems categories by the three journalists interviewed in Guadalajara. The degree of association among their rankings, W, equals .639, significant at the .01 level. As can be seen from summing the ranks, category 9, "food supply" was ranked by consensus the most important urban problem and category 11, "misappropriation, bribery and corruption among bureaucrats," was ranked the least

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[14] Ibid., pp. 237-38.

TABLE 6

RANKINGS OF 20 URBAN PROBLEMS IN GUADALAJARA BY JOURNALISTS OF THREE NEWSPAPERS IN THAT CITY

Editor	Category						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
El Informador	4	2	9	14	15	7	1
El Occidental	12	1	5	4	6	11	3
El Sol de Guadalajara	18	10	18	5	7	1	4
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
El Informador	13	3	16	17	10	6	12
El Occidental	18	2	8	20	19	9	10
El Sol de Guadalajara	18	2	12	18	11	3	6
		15	16	17	18	19	20
El Informador		20	8	18	19	11	5
El Occidental		14	13	17	15	16	7
El Sol de Guadalajara		13	18	8	14	15	9

W = .639 p = < .01 df = 19

important.

Table 7 illustrates the rankings of twenty urban problems categories by news coverage of the three newspapers of the journalists interviewed in Guadalajara. The degree of association among the content rankings, W, equals .669, significant at the .01 level. As can be seen from summing the ranks, category 9, "food supply," ranked first in composite coverage as the most important urban problem. Three categories were tied in ranking the least important: category 1, "overpopulation," category 14, "inflation," and category 18, "zones of crowded, small apartments and of shacks."

Mexico City

Table 8 illustrates the rankings of twenty urban problems categories by the nine journalists interviewed in Mexico City. The degree of association among their rankings, W, equals .438, significant at the .001 level. As can be seen from summing the ranks, category 20, "potable water," was ranked by consensus the most important urban problem and category 15, "lack of credit for social works," was ranked the least important.

Table 9 illustrates the rankings of twenty urban problems categories by news coverage of the nine newspapers of the journalists interviewed in Mexico City. The degree of association among the content rankings, W, equals .323, significant at the .001 level. As can be seen from summing the ranks, category 6, "mass transit," ranked first in composite coverage as the most important urban problem; category 16, "drainage," and category 17, "wandering vendors," tied in ranking the least important.

TABLE 7

RANKINGS OF 20 URBAN PROBLEMS IN GUADALAJARA BY NEWS COVERAGE OF THREE NEWSPAPERS IN THAT CITY

Newspaper	Category						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
El Informador	18.5	4	14	12	15	7	1
El Occidental	17.5	2	10	5	14	8	4
El Sol de Guadalajara	13	13	13	13	13	4	3
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
El Informador	8	3	9	13	10.5	2	18.5
El Occidental	12	1	9	17.5	17.5	7	17.5
El Sol de Guadalajara	13	1	13	13	13	5	13
	15	16	17	18	19	20	
El Informador	16	6	18.5	18.5	5	10.5	
El Occidental	13	6	17.5	17.5	11	3	
El Sol de Guadalajara	13	13	2	13	13	13	

W = .669 p = < .01 df = 19

TABLE 8

RANKINGS OF 20 URBAN PROBLEMS IN MEXICO CITY BY JOURNALISTS OF NINE NEWSPAPERS IN THAT CITY

Editor	Category									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Excelsior	2	1	13	6	12	7	14	15	11	3
El Heraldo	17	2	7	3	16	1	15	6	13	4
El Nacional	1	13	10	7	4	2	17	17	9	5
Novedades	14	12	7	8	9	10	13	18	5	4
Diario de la Tarde	[illegible]	2	17.5	3	12	4	11	17.5	13	6
La Prensa	17	5	17	6	10	3	17	17	1	8
El Sol de Mexico	2	1	3	5	7	8	18.5	18.5	4	13
El Sol de Mexico (med.)	1	3	17	16	15	5	6	19	9	14
El Universal	18	5	18	15	14	6	4	18	2	13

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Excelsior	8	19.5	5	10	19.5	17	16	4	18	9
El Heraldo	8	19	5	14	19	12	19	9	10	11
El Nacional	12	11	6	8	17	17	17	17	17	3
Novedades	6	2	11	15	18	18	18	18	3	1
Diario de la Tarde	10	17.5	17.5	14	17.5	17.5	7	8	9	5
La Prensa	9	7	11	12	17	13	17	4	17	2
El Sol de Mexico	11	14	15	6	18.5	16	18.5	12	10	9
El Sol de Mexico (med.)	10	8	7	11	19	12	19	4	13	2
El Universal	7	9	3	12	18	11	18	8	10	1

W = .438 $p < .001$ df = 19

TABLE 9

RANKINGS OF 20 URBAN PROBLEMS IN MEXICO CITY BY NEWS COVERAGE OF NINE NEWSPAPERS IN THAT CITY

Editor	Category									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Excelsior	8	10	6.5	16	6.5	3	16	16	5	16
El Heraldo	15	5	18	6	4	1	12	9	10.5	3
El Nacional	16	16	.	16	6	1	16	16	3	7
Novedades	15.5	15.5	7	15.5	15.5	6	10	15.5	8	3.5
Diario de la Tarde	15	15	15	15	2	3	9	15	7	6
La Prensa	15	5.5	15	8	9	2	15	15	1	15
El Sol de Mexico	4.5	2	1	10	14	7	18	13	3	18
El Sol de Mexico (med.)	2	16	11	16	16	8	6.5	16	6.5	16
El Universal	14	14	14	14	14	4	6	14	14	14

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Excelsior	4	16	2	9	16	16	16	1	16	11
El Heraldo	7.5	7.5	2	13	14	18	18	18	10.5	18
El Nacional	5	11	2	16	8	16	16	16	10	4
Novedades	1	2	9	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	3.5	5
Diario de la Tarde	15	15	1	15	4	15	15	15	5	8
La Prensa	7	5.5	15	15	15	15	15	4	15	3
El Sol de Mexico	8	9	18	18	15	18	12	11	4.5	6
El Sol de Mexico (med.)	9	5	4	16	16	10	16	1	16	3
El Universal	3	7	1	14	14	14	14	14	5	2

W = .323 p = < .001 df = 19

The Newspaper's Role

The data presented here have indicated that two conditions existin the Mexican metropolitan press: first, newspapers do not often report urban problems in the same priorities as designated by editors responsible for such reporting. Second, editors within a city are generally agreed on what the important urban problems are, and their newspapers tend to report basically the same local urban problems with the same general emphasis, but there is less agreement between what editors in a city say is important and what the newspapers of that city report.

Data gathered through interviews and content analysis have been presented here, with some selectivity in presentation and some interpretation included in order to place the data in proper persepective. What the data mean, such as why Mexican metropolitan newspapers do not always report what their editors responsible for urban problems coverage say are key issues, is a matter of interpretation.

Summary and Conclusions: Findings Related to Urban Problems Coverage

Previously presented data on urban problems coverage within the topic of this study have been compiled from content analysis of the sixteen newspapers under study. Such content analysis was fairly standard, involving the assignment of content to categories and measurement of the amounts of news in column inches for each story and category.

Now inferences will be drawn about what the patterns of

coverage revealed by the content analysis mean. Such inferential treatment will deal with sources of communication (i.e., editors and their newspapers, separately or as a group) and will be based on attention paid to urban problems by the sources.[15] Additionally, such inferences will be based on other information about the cities involved, perceptions of non-journalists, and observations of the researcher.

Discrepancies in Coverage

As the data have shown, there are a number of discrepancies between what the editors said were the most important local urban problems and what problems were actually reported in their newspapers. In some cases, urban problems that were designated as important were not much reported, while some problems that were reported had not been designated as important. In most cases, the rankings of the urban problems by the editor merely did not receive similar, close rankings based on amounts of coverage in his newspaper. There are several possible reasons for such disparity. First, it is possible that the editor was not very accurate in recall about important local urban problems in relatively recent weeks. Most of the editors were able to recall fairly accurately what the major campaigns or concerted reporting efforts were at their newspapers in the previous month. It would appear likely, therefore, that they were inclined to remember only the most recent and most urgent urban problems. When it came to ranking other problems, either poor memory or other factors, such as personal perception and bias, could have been more strongly

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[15]For a concise discussion of inferential aspects of content analysis, see Wayne A. Danielson, op. cit., pp. 194-99.

associated to responses.

Second, it is possible that the discrepancies between perception and coverage of urban problems occurred because of the nature of the editor's job and of journalism in Mexico today: the editor is responsible for a number of kinds of news reporting, such as all local news or even all news published in the newspaper. The rigors of his job may not permit him the "luxury" of meditating and carefully planning what he wishes reported in his newspaper.[16] Similarly, the editor usually makes assignments to reporters, acting as a supervisor of coverage. In this respect he is dependent upon his reporters and upon their critical faculties in coverage of urban problems. The reporting of many of the urban problems is complex, for the problems are not simple. They require a reporting of topics, issues, solutions rather than events.[17]

Yet, many, perhaps most, of the metropolitan newspapers in Mexico continue to report superficially nearly all local news. The reason probably lies with the reporters, the editors and the publishers of the press; but despite the source of the responsibility, it may well explain, in part, the discrepancy between what an editor says is important and what his newspaper fails to report because the proper sources are not consulted or the appropriate questions asked.

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[16] Gieber's study of "gatekeepers" in the United States found job structure and routine to be related to mechanical handlings of news, for example. See Gieber, op. cit.

[17] Copple writes about the need for more insightful reporting--the need for recognizing that not only are news topics more complex in recent years, but that newspaper readers are becoming more educated and more sophisticated in needs and demands in

Third, neither the editor nor his newspaper operates in a vacuum. The editor has at least one superior to whom he is responsible for news coverage under his charge.[18] Presumably the superior could set news policies that did not conform to the editor's priorities in local coverage. On a higher plane, the newspaper, if it is at all responsive to the social and political systems, may alter its coverage in the national interest. For example, one factor that may be influencing urban problems reporting in Mexico is the emphasis of the national government on rural problems and rural development. On March 15, 1975, President Luis Echeverria demanded that students from the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM) and other universities go to the countryside "as a duty and not as a simple excursion disguised as social service work."[19] Such emphasis goes beyond students' social service projects:

> More than 58 percent of the Inter-American Development Bank's loans to Mexico have gone directly to agricultural development, and the proportion rises significantly if other projects influencing agricul-

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newsreading. Although written about the United States and U.S. journalism, the arguments would seem to apply to Mexico, which is experiencing the same relative increases in both complexity of issues and rising levels of literacy and education. See Neal Copple, Depth Reporting: An Approach to Journalism (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964).

[18]Fourteen of the fifteen editors interviewed were either a jefe de informacion or jefe de redaccion. Both positions have at least a director ejecutivo above them. One interviewee was a director.

[19]"Mexican Students Are Urged to Help Farmers," The Daily Bulletin, Mexico City, Mexico, March 16, 1975.

> tural productivity, such as those related to the development of transportation and energy resources, are added in.[20]

Emphasis on rural problems, some of which are the same as urban problems (e.g., potable water, medical assistance, energy resources) but even more acute, can divert the newshole available for coverage of urban problems.

Finally, it is possible that discrepancies between designation of urban problems as important by an editor and amounts of news coverage by his newspaper can be accounted for in terms of the nature of the relationship between the journalist and the government official in Mexico. News reporters are often underpaid in Mexico. As a result, many of them work at two jobs. Some accept igualas (gratuities or bribes) from persons and agencies that are regular sources of news, especially government sources. The igualas are sometimes for suppression of unfavorable or embarrassing news, sometimes for use of flattering and preferential treatment and use of press releases that do not really qualify as news.[21] One Mexican director ejecutivo believes such practices are a serious problem in Monterrey:

> Corruption is rampant here. It is very difficult to fight, for one gets used to it, like the slums on the outskirts of town. There are maybe four or five honest reporters--those who do not take igualas--in Monterrey and they work for our newspapers. We have

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[20]Speech given by Antonio Ortiz Mena, president of the Inter-American Development Bank, at "The Seminar of Modern Mexico," University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, April 1, 1975.

[21]For a listing and brief discussion of various methods of censorship and press control in Mexico, see Richard Fagen and William S. Tuohy, Politics and Privilege in a Mexican City (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972), p. 54. Also see Merrill, Bryan and Alisky, op. cit., pp. 180-82.

> those who do; I cannot prove it, but in my heart I know they do. I cannot fire them because of the trade unions and stiff labor laws.[22]

The potential result of such a situation is the neglecting of some urban problems coverage and overemphasizing of other coverage by the reporter who is paid by a government official to modify his reporting, or the reporter who is on the payroll of, say, the Department of Urban Transit as his second job.

Congruities and Strengths in Coverage

As data of this study on intra-city comparisons of rankings of urban problems by editors and by news coverage show, there is some basic agreement on what the basic urban problems are within a particular city. Although most of the problems are the same, some do not exist (or are not perceived as important) in other cities or, at the least, vary in intensity. Whether the three cities of Monterrey, Guadalajara and Mexico have different urban problems, what those problems are, and how they are perceived is difficult to determine. Even mayors of Latin American cities have trouble deciding what urban problems are crucial:

> The recently convened Regional Assembly of Latin American and Caribbean Mayors, held in Guadalajara in November, 1974, demonstrated the heterogeneity of criteria, the diversity of foci and evaluations that the same problems or phenomena suggested for city government authorities. On the other hand, it also showed the division among them, and the ignorance of characteristics, circumstances and problems in other cities; they could not find a common language.[23]

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[22]Interview with Rodolfo Junco de la Vega, executive director, El Norte and El Sol newspapers, Monterrey, Mexico, March 10, 1975.

[23]Mail questionnaire comment of Daniel Vazquez, advisor, Commission of Municipal Urban Planning (COPLAUR), Guadalajara, Mexico (undated).

If one bears in mind the different settings of Monterrey, an industrial "frontier" city with a proximity to the United States; Guadalajara, a "Western" city that some Mexicans call lo mexicano, the "typical" Mexican city; and Mexico City, the huge metropolis that is the cultural, economic and political heartbeat of the nation, the advantages of intra-city comparisons can be seen. It is the coverage of urban problems by newspapers within the individual cities that should be dealt with, then.

Monterrey

Previous discussion has often centered on comparison of rankings of editors of local urban problems to coverage of those urban problems by their newspapers; relatively little atttention has been paid to the total amount of urban problems coverage by a particular city. Yet, such a ratio of total urban problems coverage to total newshole is rather important. For example, neither El Norte or El Sol fare very well in comparisons of what the editor interviewed there said were important urban problems and rankings of urban problems based on actual coverage by the two newspapers. However, El Norte devoted 17.1 percent of its total newshole to urban problems coverage, the highest ratio of any of the sixteen Mexican newspapers studied. El Sol, with 14.9 percent of its total newshole devoted to urban problems coverage, was second highest. On the average, the four newspapers in Monterrey allotted 11.9 percent of their total newsholes to urban problems reporting. There are no authoritative estimates of what is a "sufficient" or "good" percentage of urban problems coverage in the Mexican metropolitan press, but it is the purely subjective evaluation of

the researcher that 10 percent or more of the total newshole devoted to urban problems coverage constitutes better-than-average reporting.

Guadalajara

The three newspapers in Guadalajara averaged 11.4 percent of their total newsholes devoted to urban problems coverage. El Sol de Guadalajara, with 12.9 percent, was third of all sixteen newspapers; El Informador, with 11.7 percent, was fourth highest in newshole proportion; and El Occidental, with 9.5 percent, tied El Sol de Mexico (mediodia) for sixth place. Additionally, it can be said that the editors of the three Guadalajara newspapers showed great enthusiasm and expressed strong concern about urban problems in their city. The researcher inferred this demeanor to indicate civic pride and social concern.

Mexico City

The average proportion of the total newshole devoted to urban problems coverage by the nine newspapers in the Mexico City was 4.5 percent. This would seem to be a rather low percentage for the largest of the three cities studied, one with approximately 20 percent of the national population and fully five times larger than either Monterrey or Guadalajara. The low percentage can be partially explained in terms of the unique status of Mexico City in relation to the rest of the nation: because of its size and long history as not only the capital but the center of the nation in many aspects of life, a number of Mexicans look upon Mexico

City as almost synonymous with the national ethic and spirit.[24] Because of such an outlook, some of the newspapers of Mexico City seem to regard their roles in journalism as national roles. It is quite natural for journalists to take such a stance in a nation's capital city; the same factor affects the newspapers of Washington, London, Paris and Tokyo. However, perception of the goal of a newspaper as reporting national news can reduce local coverage in some ways, and coverage of urban problems appears to be one of them. For example, Mexico City newspapers devote a sizable amount of their newsholes to national stories that deal with the problems of the nation's development, such as food production, energy resources, inflation, unemployment, health care, social service, etc. One will notice that all of these closely resemble or are the same as categories of local urban problems used in this study. But they are the focus of national problems, some urban and some rural, not local urban problems. The methodology and scope of this study did not allow such coverage to be recorded as local urban problems coverage. But concern with such coverage by newspapers in Mexico City probably accounts for the lower percentage of coverage of local urban problems. Several of the newspapers, notably Excelsior, El Nacional, Novedades and El Universal, also publish large amounts of international news; even though these newspapers had the largest newsholes of the sixteen studied, they

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[24]Discussions with a number of editors as well as with non-journalists in Monterrey and Guadalajara as well as in Mexico City indicated that this is a prevalent attitude; not all informants agreed that Mexico City is predominantly important, but the consensus was that a number of persons, especially in Mexico City, think that it is.

did not have very much proportionate space for local news coverage.

Another aspect of Mexico City's unique position in the nation may help account for lower percentages of urban problems coverage: as the political center of Mexico, the capital city's milieu may be intimidating to some newspapers. As Johnson observes, "There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that political independence from Mexico City increases with geographical distance from the capital."[25] It seems likely, then, that newspapers in Monterrey and Guadalajara do not have to be as concerned about adverse reactions of government officials to news illuminating urban problmes that government agencies are unable or unwilling to cope with.[26] As a case in point, one issue of El Sol de Mexico devoted an entire page to urban problems of several smaller cities and settlements in the State of Mexico (not local coverage).[27] That one page of non-local coverage of urban problems represented twice the average daily newshole for coverage of local urban problems for that newspaper during the sample period. It is, of course, possible that consideration of relationships with local officials

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[25]Kenneth F. Johnson, Mexican Democracy: A Critical View (Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971), p. 140.

[26]This is not to imply that editors and publishers can be or are oblivious to government officials' displeasure and/or power to effect repercussions, bur rather that in Monterrey and Guadalajara only the state and relatively weaker local officials are to be seriously and continuously contended with, for the most part. Fagen and Tuohy, op. cit., pp. 53-55, discuss how the relative positions of power among the local, state and federal branches of government and the dominant political party affect the political reporting of the press in Jalapa; their observations can be and are generalized to most of the rest of Mexico.

[27]El Sol de Mexico, March 10, 1975, p. 11-A.

had nothing to do with that particular reporting, but it does seem unusual that some of the coverage of urban problems sixty miles away was not from wire copy or correspondents, meaning that local reporters must have been assigned.

Summary of Key Findings

Comparison of rankings of the importance of twenty categories of urban problems by journalists with actual news coverage of those categories in the journalists' newspapers revealed a rho coefficient of correlation of .455, significant at the .05 level. One may conclude that several factors prevented a higher correlation in those rankings:

--possible poor recall by journalists of what the more recent urban problems of importance had been in their cities;

--lack of control by journalists over what is published as compared to what they would ideally publish;

--dependence of the journalists upon reporters for coverage of urban problems, even though the editor made the assignment;

--effect upon actual news coverage of influencing conditions, such as a higher editor's preferences, or agenda-setting that emanates from the social and political systems (i.e., emphasis upon rural problems solution as a national priority);

--possible suppression of, or lack of emphasis on, urban problems news that might be embarrassing to government officials and agencies responsible for solution of such problems. Igualas to reporters might be instrumental in leading to such "oversights" in reporting.

The data show strong correlations of rankings when subjected to intra-city comparisons, both of rankings by journalists and by newspaper coverage. The Kendall coefficient of concordance,

W, was found to be .580, significant at the .05 level for rankings by three journalists in Monterrey, and .617, significant at the .001 level, for rankings by news coverage in that city. In Guadalajara, W was found to be .639, significant at the .01 level, for rankings by three journalists, and .669, significant at the .01 level, for rankings by news coverage in that city. In Mexico City, W was found to be .438, signicant at the .001 level, for rankings by nine journalists, and .323, significant at the .001 level, for rankings by news coverage in that city.

These comparisons reflect a basic agreement within each of the three cities, both on perceived importance of specific urban problems by the journalists of that city, and of actual news coverage of those urban problems by the newspapers of that city. The use of intra-city comparisons is a more accurate method of evaluating news coverage since urban problems vary in each of the three cities.

Correlation alone does not reflect all important aspects of urban problems coverage, however; the correlation between what a journalist says is important, and what his newspaper reports is revealing and interesting, but equally important is the relative amount of newshole devoted to such coverage. The data revealed the following:

--Monterrey's four newspapers allotted 11.9 percent of their total newsholes to urban problems reporting of the twenty categories studied.

Guadalajara's three newspapers also had a large newshole for urban problems reporting, averaging 11.4 percent of the sample.

--Mexico City's nine newspapers devoted far less space to the urban problems categories under study, with 4.5 percent.

However, it should be recognized that most of the dailies of Mexico City devote a sizeable portion of their newsholes to national and international news. Additionally, intra-city comparisons of rankings did reveal a basic agreement among journalists in Mexico City and also reflected that consensus in actual news coverage of the urban problems categories under study.